

Dear Santa Nyanda

Written by Dederick Venter

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Communications Minister Sipiwe Nyanda's early Christmas present of lower interconnect rates has been received with much joy by alternative telecommunications provider Vox Telecom.

"With more than a month to go, we hope it is not too cheeky to put in a request for some extras that would really make it a Yuletide to remember," says Vox CEO Tony van Marken on discussing the announcement.

"Not to seem ungrateful, but we have some ideas for a few items that would bring happiness to a lot of people, and also bulk up their Christmas stockings without too much extra effort," he said.

"Let's be honest, lower interconnect rates in and of themselves are a bit like an iPod without music. By itself it won't result in savings to the consumer, so we thought of a few other ideas to really spread some much-needed cheer."

- Local number portability – Van Marken says the key to competitive telecoms prices is competition. "Addressing interconnect in isolation won't achieve that, so the first item on our wish list is porting. Currently, despite being technically feasible, the issue is 45th on Icasa's priority list, and Telkom will only release customers to other operators in blocks of 1,000. There's no reason why it can't be available to everybody, right now."

- Local loop unbundling – Vox Telecom is full of praise for the Minister's decisiveness on the issue of interconnect rates. "Perhaps the same resolve can next be brought to bear on the local loop issue, which has been neglected for years. Alternative operators must have access to the links between telephone exchanges and the homes and businesses of customers, if prices are to fall significantly."

- Carrier pre-select – "Carriers should also be allowed to choose which provider they use for a particular call, to obtain the best price for consumers," Van Marken concludes. "This can also happen without much fuss."

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Two front teeth

“The key to achieving all this, of course, is to finally give Santa’s elves, Icasa, some teeth, to enable them to enforce existing liberal telecoms regulation in a timely fashion,” he explains. “Ultimately it is ICASA who has to make things happen and the Minsiter and the DOC need to ensure they are structured to succeed in their mission.”

Besides the encouraging leadership shown by Minister Nyanda, Van Marken praises the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Communications for their role in the Ministry’s success.

“The committee must be complimented on the pressure it brought to bear on the process. We would respectfully caution that members keep their eye on the ball, to ensure their goodwill is carried through with actual relief to everyone’s pockets.”

A happy Festive Season to all!

About Vox Telecom Limited

Vox Telecom Limited is a leading alternative, independent telecom operator, providing voice and data services to the Southern African market. The Group competes through its primary brands Vox Datapro, Vox Orion, Vox Telepreneur and @lantic, and has offices in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth, as well as in Windhoek, Namibia. Vox Telecom is a listed company trading on the Alternative Exchange (AltX), a division of the JSE Limited.

Investor and shareholder information is available at www.voxtelecom.co.za .